UNITED NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ICEF/1993/SR.5
17 August 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

EXECUTIVE BOARD

1993 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 26 April 1993, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. WARD (Canada)

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General debate (continued)

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. CASAS (Spain) said that the recent changes in the situation of children in the world were attributable mainly to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Declaration adopted at the World Summit for Children as well as to the global activities of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), particularly its participation in emergency operations in areas affected by war or natural disaster. While the international media had focused attention on such "loud" emergencies, it was the ongoing work of UNICEF in the "silent" emergencies in the depressed areas of the world that often succeeded in bringing about profound and lasting changes. UNICEF should therefore continue to strengthen its capacity to execute development programmes and to create the conditions that would permit the various disadvantaged groups, particularly women and children, to exercise their social rights fully. In that connection, he welcomed the efforts of UNICEF to ensure the full participation of women in development programmes.

2. As for the work of UNICEF in the various regions of the world, he supported the proposal that priority consideration should continue to be given to the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, where the situation of children was a cause for grave concern. He welcomed the positive orientation of the activities of UNICEF in Latin America and the Caribbean, in particular the direct cooperation between the Spanish Committee and the subregional programme of Basic Services for Children in the Andean Region (PROANDES). He also welcomed the proposal that the Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean (SAFLAC) should be continued for the period 1994 to 1997, since it could make a significant contribution to human development in the region. Spain also fully supported the proposal concerning the continued financing from supplementary resources of the programmes for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the newly independent States of the former Soviet Union. His country was deeply concerned over the situation of children in the former Yugoslavia who had been displaced from their homes or who still remained in war zones. In general, the coordinated emergency activities of UNICEF should be extended to the other areas of the world affected by war.

3. Spain shared the concern of UNICEF over recent survey results which indicated that the mortality and malnutrition rates in some urban areas had exceeded those in depressed rural areas and it supported UNICEF programmes for the relief of poverty in urban centres. In that connection, the research and publication activities of the International Child Development Centre were making a significant contribution to the promotion of greater awareness of the problems of children.

4. The relationship between children, the environment and sustainable development had not so far received sufficient attention. UNICEF should therefore conduct a careful review, through the Commission on Sustainable Development, of the objectives and strategies of the World Summit for Children which were set out in Agenda 21.

(Mr. Casas, Spain)

5. On the subject of family planning, Spain fully supported the current UNICEF approach of actively promoting family planning while respecting the cultural characteristics of countries, and promoting safe motherhood and child spacing. In keeping with the objective defined by the European Community, it also supported efforts to place all hospitals in the service of children.

6. Spain was particularly committed to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the realization of the objectives set forth in the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children. The preparation of its national report on the implementation of the Convention was in the final stages. That report, together with an Inter-Ministerial Plan for Children which had been drawn up, had served as a catalyst to increase national awareness of the reality of children and had created useful channels of communication between various public administrations at the national, regional and local levels as well as with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerned with children. Given its own national experience, Spain believed that UNICEF should play an active role at the World Summit for Social Development.

7. Mr. KOYT (Central African Republic) said that the implementation of the national programmes of action adopted pursuant to the Declaration and the Plan of Action would permit UNICEF to honour its commitment to children in the fields of health, education, environment and children's rights. The difficult situation of children throughout the world posed an immense challenge to the international community to create the conditions in which their basic needs, and in particular their education needs, could be satisfied, since it was in the schools of today that the world of tomorrow was built.

8. In that connection, his country believed that the advancement of women and the improved well-being of mothers was the solution to many of the problems faced by children. UNICEF should therefore allocate a greater share of its resources to improving the status of women and to ensuring their greater participation in its programmes.

9. The international community had already realized that it was not enough to await the benefits of economic growth in order to rescue the millions of children whose future was jeopardized by disease, malnutrition and ignorance. It was time to think seriously about incorporating the human dimension into its development plans. For its part, the Central African Republic was grateful to UNICEF and its other international partners for the considerable technical and financial resources which they had provided for activities on behalf of the children of that country.

10. Mr. MACHIN (United Kingdom) welcomed the contribution UNICEF had made to the response of the United Nations to recent resolutions concerning operational activities, especially resolution 47/199, which preserved both the identity of individual agencies and the authority of their governing bodies. If the United Nations was to remain an important actor in the development and humanitarian fields, United Nations agencies and their member States must see themselves as contributing to an overall United Nations effort rather than maintaining their independence at the expense of such a team approach. Coordination and cooperation were therefore crucial to the success of reforms.

(Mr. Machin, United Kingdom)

11. While resolution 47/199 represented a useful step forward, the basic ideas it contained had already been set out in resolution 44/211, and earlier resolutions. His delegation was concerned at the slow pace of implementation of those resolutions in such areas as harmonization, coordination and training. UNICEF should not simply wait for system-wide bodies to take the initiative but should help to force the pace. For example, work on the elaboration of country strategies should start immediately in recipient countries, under the guidance of the resident coordinator.

12. The Board was meeting at the time of severe and increasing financial constraints in many of the industrialized countries. Serious budgetary pressure meant intense competition for development funding, particularly for those United Nations and other aid organizations which relied on voluntary contributions. In such an uncertain climate, the agencies must demonstrate that resources were being used efficiently. Countries needed to be convinced that scarce and highly sought after aid resources represented good value for money.

13. Against that background and the recent report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) on UNICEF, four issues were of particular concern to his Government. First, the recent multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF concluded that UNICEF was a very responsive agency which had much to offer other agencies of the United Nations system. At the same time, it also raised some concerns which his delegation hoped would be fully addressed by UNICEF. While agreeing with the evaluation's endorsement of the country programming approach, his delegation had some questions about the capacity of UNICEF to undertake capacity-building activities, which were vital to the achievement of sustainable development. It was essential also that capacity-building should be integrated into UNICEF activities in the areas of service delivery and empowerment. Indeed, empowerment was an important aspect of the work of UNICEF and his delegation was concerned that it had been identified as a weak element in the intervention strategies. It supported the conclusion that UNICEF should clarify its understanding of empowerment and community participation and hoped that that question would be addressed urgently. Similarly, he would like to see gender aspects incorporated into all of the sector programmes of UNICEF. In addition, his delegation looked forward to greater accountability of the programmes of UNICEF and to more information about the effectiveness of those programmes. It needed to be convinced that UNICEF was seriously considering ways of improving its overall effectiveness and responsiveness to the needs of developing countries.

14. The second issue of concern was the medium-term plan. Effective management of programmes required a sound financial base and, while the income forecasts of UNICEF had not led to overcommitment in recent years, his delegation shared the concerns expressed in the report of ACABQ concerning the transparency of the budget and resource projections. If programme delivery was to be truly cost-effective, administrative costs, including staff costs, must be kept down.

15. On the third issue, that of UNICEF headquarters accommodation, one of the key tasks of the Board in the current financial climate was to optimize the use of resources. In that context, the projected savings of the New Rochelle option would be a very considerable boost to the general resources of UNICEF and thus to its country programmes. Funding allocated to headquarters accommodation was funding denied to recipient Governments for their vital development and other

(Mr. Machin, United Kingdom)

programmes. The ability of UNICEF to raise additional funding in such circumstances could well be adversely affected. His delegation would therefore work with others to ensure that the Executive Board approved the most cost-effective option.

16. The fourth issue was the recommendation of ACABQ for an independent management study to determine whether UNICEF operations were carried out efficiently and cost-effectively and how they could be further improved. His delegation found that recommendation attractive and he would be interested to hear the views of other delegations on the subject, as well as the reaction of the Executive Director to the ACABQ report as a whole.

17. Turning to Eastern Europe, he said his delegation shared the concerns that had recently been expressed about the involvement of UNICEF in Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic States and the newly independent States of the former Soviet Union, and therefore supported the programme proposals for those countries presented to the Board.

18. The previous year had been an extremely difficult one for the international community and United Nations agencies in their attempts to meet the needs of a growing number of major and complex emergencies. The contribution of UNICEF, which had responded to emergencies in over 50 countries during 1992, had generally been seen as excellent, particularly in Somalia. Some emergencies spanned the bridge between relief and development and that escalation had put enormous pressure on national budgets as aid resources were redirected towards humanitarian assistance. In 1992, for example, approximately 23 per cent of UNICEF expenditure had gone to emergency appeals. That high level of emergency assistance inevitably had implications for the long-term development work of UNICEF, which should maximize its use of extrabudgetary resources for emergency work in order to minimize the implications for its long-term development activities. Coordination and cooperation were crucial to a more effective delivery of humanitarian assistance in emergencies. Under the leadership of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, all United Nations agencies should be fully involved in the formulation of consolidated appeals both at headquarters and in the field.

19. Finally, the international community should not forget the courage and dedication of the field staff of UNICEF who had tragically lost their lives in the service of children. His delegation hoped that the current deliberations of the Executive Board would lead to an even more enhanced and effective UNICEF of which they would be proud.

20. Mr. KOROMA (Sierra Leone) said that the World Summit for Children, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Bamako Initiative, inter alia, strengthened the hopes of the majority of the people of Sierra Leone for whom life would otherwise be bleak and meaningless. He therefore hoped that the Board would take bold decisions to strengthen the capacity of UNICEF to translate those hopes into reality.

21. His country had signed the Declaration and the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children, and had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Unfortunately, the difficult economic situation, which was exacerbated by the conflict in neighbouring Liberia, had so far prevented the

(Mr. Koroma, Sierra Leone)

Government from completing its national programme of action. The proposals set out in the Consensus of Dakar was an innovative way of making the necessary resources available to address the difficult situation of African children. Sierra Leone hoped that, with the continuing assistance of UNICEF and its other partners, it would be able to attain the proposed objectives by the mid-term of 1995. It also noted with interest the determination expressed by the international community to eliminate iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) by the same deadline.

22. The implementation of the Bamako Initiative had been hampered by insufficient funding and by the crushing weight of the debt burden. Sierra Leone supported that Initiative and hoped that the International Conference on Assistance to African Children (ICAAC), sponsored by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), would lead to renewed support for African countries, particularly in the health sector.

23. In the field of maternal and child health, UNICEF support had been instrumental in extending services to include an expanded programme on immunization (EPI), the control of diarrhoeal diseases (CDD) and nutrition and health education. Indeed, UNICEF support had contributed greatly to curbing the incidence of major childhood diseases such as poliomyelitis, whooping cough and measles. In addition to the village health centres, a network of maternal and child health centres existed throughout the country which dealt specifically with problems related to pregnancy, childbirth, and children under the age of five. An important aspect of the centres' work was growth monitoring, for which training was provided.

24. On the subject of rural women, he noted that in most African countries women not only raised the children but were also the principal producers of the family's food requirements. Since the approval of Sierra Leone's country programme, however, UNICEF had provided only limited support for women's activities. The provision of seeds, tools and equipment to allow women to expand their agricultural activities, especially the cultivation of rice, groundnuts and cassava had nevertheless been particularly useful. Under the water and environmental sanitation component of the programme, villages would be equipped with wells and sanitation facilities. UNICEF would also provide funds for the training of voluntary project leaders and village committee members.

25. Given the continued economic and social crises in recipient countries, his delegation generally supported the budget proposals submitted to the Board by UNICEF. Indeed, it was clear that the international debt crisis was largely responsible for the deterioration in the conditions of children in debt-distressed developing countries. His delegation nevertheless hoped that the Board would enhance its ability to meet that and similar challenges but was concerned over the decline in the contributions of donor States, particularly at a time when needs were so great.

26. Mr. AMADHILA (Observer for Namibia) said that only a fraction of the total suffering of the world's children received due media exposure. Only five months after attaining its independence, Namibia had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In December 1991 it had adopted a national plan of action to achieve the goals for children in the 1990s as elaborated in the Declaration

(Mr. Amadhila, Observer, Namibia)

and Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit. In 1990, Namibia had adopted a national policy on children which included an expanded programme on immunization, a community-based health care programme, a rural water supply improvement programme and a national literacy programme. The national programme of action for children was now fully integrated into the national development plan. Following the recent International Conference on Assistance to African Children (ICAAC) Namibia had adopted strategies for raising immunization coverage to 80 per cent against diphtheria, poliomyelitis, tetanus and other diseases by 1995. There had been a rapid increase in measles and tetanus toxoid coverage in Namibia during the past three years and the Government was committed to universal child immunization (UCI). Various measures had been taken to strengthen the Namibian control of diarrhoeal diseases (CDD) programme and a number of strategies had been adopted for the elimination of iodine deficiency disorders (IDD). Advocacy for the development and implementation of the vitamin A deficiency control programme had also been set up. The preliminary demographic health survey (DHS) had been completed and the final report would be available soon. Namibia was fully committed to the goals of the "baby-friendly" hospital initiative and had taken a number of steps to achieve those goals. The national acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) control programme had been established and an AIDS-NGO consortium had recently been inaugurated. It was hoped that in 1993, technical and other support would be provided from UNICEF and other agencies to address intermediate goals in that area.

27. Basic education coverage in Namibia was inadequate, with high drop-out rates even in primary school. Some 60 per cent of adults, predominantly women, were practically illiterate and had little or no opportunity to upgrade their skills and knowledge. The education sector received the largest share of both the national budget and donor assistance. The Ministry of Education and Culture was currently preparing a sectoral development plan to achieve universal primary education and expanded adult literacy.

28. In addition to the distortion, fragmentation and extreme disparities arising from Namibia's colonial past, the challenges of building a more equal society in which the needs of women and children were effectively addressed had been further compounded by a severe drought in 1992. Priority had been given to children under five, as well as to pregnant and nursing mothers in rural areas. At the same time, efforts had been made to preserve sectoral allocations to basic services; funds for public health activities and rural water supply development had even been increased.

29. Children in South Africa continued to suffer under apartheid. Namibia would therefore welcome any efforts to bring about a resumption of negotiations in that country and the total dismantling of apartheid. He also drew attention to the silent suffering of children in Angola.

30. He welcomed the multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF contained in the report entitled Strategic Choices for UNICEF. When examining three possible intervention models for UNICEF, the specific conditions prevailing in individual countries should be taken into account. He stressed that the contribution of UNICEF to improving the overall health of women and children had been remarkable.

(Mr. Amadhila, Observer, Namibia)

31. A country-wide campaign had been conducted to explain to women their basic human rights and to familiarize them with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, a summary of which would shortly be given wide distribution in the major local languages. Finally, he thanked UNICEF for its excellent support and assistance, without which the progress made by Namibian women and children could not have been achieved.

32. Mr. HAMBURGER (Netherlands) said that since 1992, UNICEF had been confronted with an increasing number of often complex and political emergency situations, which had imposed choices between long-term, sustainable development and emergency support. The Executive Board should give UNICEF clear directions regarding that issue. While UNICEF had a comparative advantage in certain aspects of emergency operations, it should always be aware of its own responsibilities, and see them in relation to those of other agencies.

33. The problem of choices was one of the main themes of the evaluation report carried out by Australia, Canada, Denmark and Switzerland. His delegation had noted that a number of the major findings of the evaluation corresponded to its own concerns. It urged UNICEF to be careful not to take on too many new issues or launch too many initiatives; it was essential to try to sustain what had already been achieved. The evaluation identified three intervention strategies: support to the delivery of social services, capacity-building and empowerment. The Executive Director had indicated that advocacy was an important aspect of all three strategies; his delegation concurred and felt that advocacy might even be regarded as a fourth intervention strategy. UNICEF had used advocacy to initiate certain goals and activities, one example being the introduction of the concept of "adjustment with a human face". The relationship and balance between such activities and the field-oriented work of UNICEF should be explicitly recognized in order to improve follow-up on changes that had been advocated. Specific attention should be paid to the translation of global goals and initiatives into concrete action at the country level, which should remain the backbone of UNICEF activities. Global policies should allow for adaptation to country-specific conditions. His delegation had been somewhat disappointed that the views of recipient and donor countries, institutions and other organizations had not been clearly reflected in the report. It believed that the recommendations regarding the selection of three intervention models were rather bold and far-reaching and needed to be more concrete. However, the report should provide valuable input for the Board's discussions and policy decisions, and he called for a proper follow-up to the evaluation in the context of the reform of the Economic and Social Council and the governing bodies.

34. On the question of financial accountability, his delegation expressed its appreciation for the improved structure and format of the budget documents. He urged UNICEF to be careful and realistic in calculating its expected income for the coming biennium. UNICEF estimates were, unfortunately, often overoptimistic, and the budget proposals might need to be adjusted in the light of the economic recession in some countries which were traditionally among the major donors.

35. Mrs. NDIAYE (Senegal) said that the recent International Conference on Assistance to African Children (ICAAC) at Dakar, sponsored by OAU, had been held to draw attention to the plight of African children. Every year in Africa over 4.5 million children under five years of age fell victim to various endemic and parasitic diseases, not to mention malnutrition and AIDS. Over the previous three decades, most African countries had been able to reduce the infant mortality rate, increase life expectancy and improve access to primary education, drinking water and basic health care, including, in particular, vaccination, despite economic setbacks. Vaccination rates of 80 per cent had helped to prevent an estimated 500,000 child deaths annually. Certain countries had made great progress in the provision of essential medicines and other cost-effective service. However, the shortage of resources had hampered the development of community services and the economic recession, ill-conceived structural adjustment plans, the debt burden, civil wars, natural disasters and pandemic diseases threatened to increase mortality rates. The Dakar Conference had therefore brought together the Minister of Finance, Planning, Health and Children of the countries concerned so that joint decisions could be taken. The Bamako Initiative had made the family the focus of humanitarian action regarding family planning, AIDS and basic education. In Senegal, a new policy of decentralization would give greater power to regional bodies to promote development through community groups.

36. Non-governmental financial and technical support for child development had been increased, and in some cases collaboration had been reorganized. In Senegal, the cost of the national plan of action (NPA) for children would be $45,245,000 at 1991 prices; of that sum, $30,396,000 was expected to be contributed by UNICEF partners, while the remainder would be made up from internal sources. All African countries needed supplementary funds for the implementation of their NPAs. To that end, in November 1993, a conference would be organized at Dakar by France and Canada with a view to initiating a dialogue between the French-speaking countries of Africa and those of the North concerning the survival, protection and development of children in French-speaking Africa. The Conference was the response of the French-speaking countries to the World Summit for Children and was aimed at enabling French-speaking African countries to evaluate their efforts in favour of children's welfare, to attract the interest and support of the French-speaking countries in the North and to encourage African French-speaking countries to secure the necessary financing for the goals of the World Summit by increasing government support for children's programmes.

37. On the question of debt relief to benefit programmes for children in developing countries, she said it would be useful to have more detailed information on the steps taken by or with UNICEF in favour of those countries. A certain harmonization was necessary if the work of the Board was to be effective. A country-based evaluation of the financing of programmes would make it easier to determine how effective such steps had been.

38. Finally, observing that several speakers had drawn attention to the suffering of children in Yugoslavia or Eastern European countries, she said that the suffering of children was universal, and people unfortunately appeared to be increasingly inured to it. Awareness had been boosted by the media attention paid to Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia. Wherever children were suffering, her

(Mrs. Ndiaye, Senegal)

delegation would give its full support to UNICEF in order to build the foundations of true human development.

39. Ms. REHN (Chairperson of the Standing Group of National Committees for UNICEF) said that wars and conflicts had dramatically increased in many parts of the globe and those suffering the most were innocent children, among whom poverty, hunger and disease continued to take a heavy tool in the developing countries. Some 35,000 children died every day in both "silent" and "loud" emergencies. It was the duty of UNICEF to speak out against the numerous atrocities from which children were suffering throughout the world. In that connection, she welcomed the recent letter sent by the Executive Director to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights; UNICEF must protest against the flagrant breaches of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. She welcomed the important work done by UNICEF in providing psychological help to children traumatized by war, and in promoting "education for tolerance". At the previous session of the Board, special emphasis had been placed on the responsibility of UNICEF for children exposed to armed conflicts. Over half of the world's refugees were children under the age of 18; UNICEF had an obligation to them, especially to those who could not be assisted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) because they remained within the borders of their homeland. The National Committees wholeheartedly supported the efforts of UNICEF to get all countries to ratify the Convention and the Rights of the Child and to encourage them to prepare national plans of action (NPAs).

40. From their various activities, the National Committees, with their 100,000 volunteers in 32 countries, currently contributed a full quarter of the UNICEF budget. Those funds came from various activities which showed that people not only approved of the work of UNICEF on behalf of the children of the world, but that they also knew and cared about the plight of children in UNICEF-assisted countries. The National Committees were involved in advocacy and the broad-scale dissemination of information, as well as in education for development. Those activities had earned UNICEF a grass-roots popularity which helped to prompt Governments to maintain their contributions to UNICEF at a high level. Since it had been launched in January 1992, 33 industrialized countries had joined the "baby-friendly" hospital initiative (BFHI). National Committees had also been active in establishing multisectoral national breast-feeding committees in 23 countries. Many National Committees had acted collectively in 1992 in support of the International Conference on Assistance to African Children (ICAAC), for which they had provided the original funding and acted as conduits for information and advocacy vis-à-vis their own Governments. In that connection, she commended the African Governments for their significant achievements in formulating NPAs and restructuring their own budgets to meet the basic needs of children. National Committees had also helped in the creation of new National Committees, particularly in Eastern Europe. With regard to the management review of the Greeting Card Operations of UNICEF, she said that there was some dissatisfaction over the consultation process with the national Committees and she hoped that those concerns had been noted and that the good cooperation would continue.

41. UNICEF had a solid reputation for efficiency in the field and a lack of bureaucracy. With regard to reform within the United Nations, more and better cooperation and coordination was welcome, and the sharing of common office premises was also to be encouraged. However, making UNICEF an anonymous player

(Ms. Rehn)

amongst others would threaten its uniqueness and have serious repercussions on the advocacy and fund-raising work of the National Committees. The unique mandate of UNICEF should not be tampered with and the ability of UNICEF representatives in the field to act swiftly and flexibly should not be changed. The multi-donor evaluation report had, indeed, warned against changing the present field organization of UNICEF. There was also no justification for reducing the field personnel of UNICEF.

42. While the National Committees generally welcomed the report on family planning (E/ICEF/1993/L.5) their positions varied widely on that issue. Among many others, her own National Committee (that of Finland) strongly believed that rapid population growth was among the three or four major threats to humankind, and it was very encouraged by the experience of a number of developing countries which indicated that major reductions in birth rates could be achieved by changing both legislation and practical policies to favour family planning. UNICEF had in recent years paid more attention to family planning; many National Committees had expressed their satisfaction with the current UNICEF policy of collaborating with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) on family planning matters, each concentrating on its area of comparative advantage.

43. There was an obvious link between family planning issues and the control of AIDS. It would be useful to have statistics indicating the impact of UNICEF field programmes in that area in terms of basic health services and education.

44. With regard to the 6 per cent recovery policy, the Board was aware that donors providing supplementary funding for programmes paid a 6 per cent charge in respect of administrative overhead, from which National Committees had previously been exempted. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) had recommended that that exemption should be ended. Consultations between National Committees and the Executive Director on the implications of the recommendation were due to begin in May, in preparation for consideration of the question at the 1994 session.

45. The case studies in the multi-donor evaluation covered only six countries of the 120 or so in which UNICEF conducted operations. It also failed to represent the views of developing countries adequately. Moreover, in some countries at least, the global goals of UNICEF had come to have too much influence on policy at the country level. It should be remembered that the purpose of UNICEF programmes was to support national priorities.

46. Mr. DOGRAMACI (Observer for Turkey) said that, regrettably, states of emergency had once again come to dominate UNICEF activities in many different areas accounting for some 20 per cent of expenditure in 1992.

47. In the current reform of the United Nations system, it would be unfortunate if any action was taken that might blur the mandate or diminish the identity or functional impact of UNICEF. In that connection, the Executive Board must consider what a fully integrated field structure would mean to children. Over the past 10 years, the child mortality rate had been almost halved through high-level advocacy and social mobilization on the part of UNICEF, combined with government health programmes in the field. If UNICEF was to maintain its

(Mr. Dogramaci, Observer, Turkey)

capacity to act effectively in developing countries, its operational, structural and financial autonomy must be safeguarded. In particular, it must be able to act without bureaucratic impediments, and must be able to advocate and mobilize support on behalf of children without becoming involved in other issues. It those unique capacities were not protected, the focus on children would become blurred, and children in developing countries would suffer. While the Executive Board should support measures which contributed to a strong United Nations system and avoid duplication, it should support only those steps which safeguarded the unique capacities of UNICEF.

48. The use of global funds by UNICEF partly explained its ability to respond quickly to changing situations and to innovate. Global funds had, for example made universal child immunization a reality. In the case of Turkey, a modest sum from UNICEF, donated at the right time, had triggered a national campaign which had had the very positive result of saving over one and a half million lives. That experience had been repeated in country after country. The availability of global funds also enabled UNICEF to respond quickly to unanticipated threats to children. The Executive Board must therefore approve the global funds budget at the current session.

49. The International Paediatric Association had worked closely with UNICEF and WHO in promoting the welfare of children. A plan of action for joint activities for the years 1993-1995 would continue the fruitful cooperation between UNICEF and the Association.

50. His delegation welcomed the country programme recommendations for Eastern European and Central Asian States which were before the Executive Board. There was a dramatic need for external assistance to the children of those countries.

51. It was gratifying that, pursuant to the goals deriving from the World Summit for Children, mid-term goals had in many countries been integrated into national programmes over the past year. Virtually all mid-term goals focused on immunization, education and nutrition, and all included breast-feeding. In that connection, the baby-friendly hospital initiative had been launched in Turkey in 1991, and had now been expanded nationwide. It was gratifying that the International Paediatric Congress, in September 1992, had expressed support for breast-feeding, and that it was attempting to develop guidelines governing relations between its members and manufacturers and distributors of breast-milk substitutes. The International Paediatric Association, for its part, was reducing its dependency on such companies and it was to be hoped that other groups would do likewise. His delegation congratulated those Governments in developing countries which had banned the distribution of free and low-cost supplies of formula to health-care facilities. Compliance with such government action should be evaluated.

52. The Turkish National Committee for UNICEF had increased its activities over the past year, and had conducted a large number of fund-raising activities. The National Committee had also organized training seminars in Turkey, and in that connection he welcomed the contribution made by the UNICEF office in Turkey.

53. The drive by UNICEF to encourage universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was commendable. The Executive Board should make a strong statement urging ratification at the earliest possible date. Lastly, he

(Mr. Dogramaci, Observer, Turkey)

commended the Executive Director and the staff of UNICEF, who often worked under adverse and dangerous conditions in the field.

54. Mrs. CHAUDHRY (India) said that the past year had seen the fruition of many recent initiatives in India and the launching of several innovative programmes. India now had a national plan of action for children and an inter-ministerial committee to monitor implementation of the plan. A plan of action for the girl child was also being finalized. The two plans should, over a 10-year time-frame, improve the status of children, adolescent girls and mothers. India had also now ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

55. India was pursuing economic liberalization and structural adjustment policies that were likely, in the short run, to put further strains on the poor unless a concerted plan of poverty alleviation was put into immediate effect. If child development was to become a reality, it was essential to improve the status of women. Changes in societal attitudes, sensitization of those in charge of regulatory and development activities, the expansion of support services and increased awareness of legislation were some of the components of India's strategy. The solution ultimately lay in empowering women through training and employment and in expanding the economic space in which women lived and worked. In that connection, India was establishing a national credit fund for women.

56. One of the biggest threats to poverty alleviation was the burgeoning population, which both perpetuated poverty and jeopardized the environment. Her delegation would thus welcome increased focus by UNICEF on family planning, which must become the underlying refrain of all intervention in the social sector. UNICEF could not restrict itself to improving maternal and child health, but must promote direct intervention which would help women to view family planning as a tool in redressing demographic inequities. In particular, UNICEF should support community-based approaches to family planning.

57. The universal immunization programme in India, as in other parts of the world, had had a dramatic impact on infant mortality. The programme had also provided an opportunity to reach mothers and children through health services. In cooperation with UNICEF, India had started a child survival and safe motherhood programme as the core of its national plan of action in the area of immunization and control of various diseases and vitamin deficiencies.

58. Undernutrition continued to be a major problem in most of the developing world, and health-care intervention could not be effective unless malnutrition was eliminated. Nutrition was a multisectoral problem requiring a consensus at the highest policy-making levels, regarding the steps required to counter it and India had taken a number of initiatives in that area. She trusted that nutrition would find a place in the development agenda of all developing countries, and she strongly supported the Executive Director's proposals in that regard.

59. Her delegation welcomed the increased programme expenditure on education and hoped that the trend would continue. In India, the eradication of illiteracy had been a major national concern. Although progress had been made, the absolute number of illiterate persons had remained unacceptably high owing

(Mrs. Chaudhry, India)

to the rapid growth in the population. India was embarking on a total literacy campaign focusing specifically on women and girls.

60. India complimented UNICEF on its swift response to emergencies throughout the world, as well as to emerging challenges in Central and Eastern Europe. It was apparent, however, that such new demands on UNICEF resources were placing constraints on its programme activities. The financial analysis before the Executive Board indicated a steady rise in emergency expenditure and a decrease in programme expenditure from 1990 onwards. That was a matter of concern, and emergency expenditure commitments should in future be met primarily through supplementary resources, leaving general resources intact for ongoing commitments.

61. Mrs. GRIGORESCU (Observer for Romania) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the basic text underlying the debate in the Executive Board, which she hoped would be a promising prologue to the World Conference on Human Rights, scheduled to take place in Vienna later in 1993.

62. A synthesis of the problems facing children in Romania, which had almost 4 million inhabitants aged 0-15 years, was contained in the recommendation for supplementary funding for programmes in Central and Eastern Europe (E/ICEF/1993/P/L.29). A main issue of concern to her delegation was the strategy of the Romanian National Committee for UNICEF for the period 1993-1996, which was aimed at consolidating and enlarging activities at the national level.

63. Despite the numerous economic and social difficulties caused by the transition to a market economy in Romania, the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the improvement of the status of children represented national priorities. A number of programmes to that end were being implemented and legislative action was being taken, such as the adoption of specific provisions under the Constitution for the protection of children and juveniles. Romania was soon to become a party to the European Convention on the Legal Status of Children Born out of Wedlock. Various information activities were being carried out with a view to increasing public awareness and efforts were being made to increase the number of UNICEF volunteers.

64. Among measures designed to promote and popularize UNICEF activities in Romania, she mentioned a scientific conference on children and the destiny of mankind, and the award of special medals and certificates commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of UNICEF to some 500 individuals who had distinguished themselves in that area.

65. The implementation of such measures was impossible without generous national and international assistance and Romania consequently supported the Board's decision 1992/19 on integrated activities for children and women in Eastern and Central Europe. In addition, Romania had recently entered into an association agreement with the European Community and hoped to receive assistance from the donor States within that regional organization.

66. While acknowledging with gratitude the allocation of $3,345,000 for programmes for children in Romania during the 1993-1994 period, she regretted that the sum was modest when set against the needs, and stressed the importance of continuous, prioritized assistance, designed to strengthen the national

(Mrs. Grigorescu, Observer, Romania)

capacity to identify, analyse and solve the problems of children. UNICEF had a vital role to play as a catalysing factor in the promotion of assistance, both from donors and from Governments, for the benefit of children.

67. Turning to the important role of public awareness, at both the national and the international level, she expressed concern that only the negative aspects of the situation of children in Romania were publicized, while the country's modest but certain improvements in that area were, for political reasons, deliberately ignored. She condemned the efforts by certain circles to exploit the plight of children for political reasons and to sow the seeds of hatred where harmony, tolerance and understanding should prevail, and she cited the 1978 UNESCO Declaration on Fundamental Principles, which called on the mass media to help to eliminate ignorance and misunderstanding between peoples.

68. In conclusion, she stressed that harmony, tolerance and understanding were essential for children, not just in Romania, but the world over and she pledged Romania's support for efforts by the United Nations to shape a better future for the children of the world.

69. Mr. YAHYA (Indonesia) said that the optimism occasioned by the end of the cold war and the consequent hopes of achieving the goals set at the World Summit for Children must be tempered by caution, in view of the disturbing growth in xenophobia, racial discrimination and ethnic clashes that had claimed thousands of innocent lives, inflicting the greatest hardship and suffering on children.

70. While commending UNICEF on its response to crisis situations, he noted that the dramatic increase in expenditure on emergencies had not been matched by increases in UNICEF income and, as a result, funding available for regular programmes had been reduced. In addition, non-monetary resources, such as manpower and time, were increasingly diverted to emergencies, thereby reducing the Fund's capacity to meet the targets set at the World Summit for Children. He stressed that the priority accorded to emergencies in Africa should not impede implementation of programmes in other regions.

71. In that context, he noted that, while two thirds of the world's cases of child malnutrition occurred in Asia, general resource allocations to Asian countries were not increasing in step with UNICEF general income. More resources were urgently required to meet the needs of Asian children and, to that end, he called for the closest possible cooperation between UNICEF and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in the area of emergency response. Equally important were the long-term strategies of UNICEF, particularly in addressing the "silent" emergencies of diarrhoea, vaccine-preventable diseases and acute respiratory infections, which claimed the lives of 5,000 children daily.

72. Noting the Executive Director's call for the personal involvement of heads of State or Government in meeting the commitments they had made at the World Summit for Children, he drew attention to the undertaking of the heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement at the summit meeting in September 1992 to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Declaration and the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit. In line with UNICEF strategies, the Non-Aligned Movement advocated human-centred development, which would increase access to primary health care, improve education and

(Mr. Yahya, Indonesia)

alleviate the poverty that underlay so many of the problems suffered by children.

73. The multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF identified areas where UNICEF should do more, but failed to indicate how the necessary resources would be found. While the Indonesia case-study had certain cultural flaws, the overall report was of great value and identified areas of concern for the next country programme. With regard to the preparation of those programmes, he stressed the need to include the standards set in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

74. Turning to the problem of the spreading AIDS pandemic, he stressed the need, since the majority of HIV-infected persons were under 25, for strong educational and public awareness measures to be implemented, in conjunction with community and religious groups, to promote a healthy lifestyle founded on moral principles. In addition, UNICEF must continue to promote family planning programmes. In Indonesia, family planning was one of the five core functions of the Posyandu integrated community programmes, which covered 25,000 centres throughout the country. In addition, UNICEF programmes in that area were assisted by the National Family Planning Board.

75. His delegation believed that a global funds initiative would result in a better exchange of experience and technical advisory services and help to strengthen national capacity-building and regional networks. It also favoured consolidating the administrative and programme support budget and the global funds budget into a single document and making the global funds project more specific on the programme implementation measures to be taken. In addition, Indonesia felt that the allocation of global funds at the country level should not be decided exclusively by headquarters, as was currently the case.

76. Indonesia stressed the need to clarify the categorization of headquarters posts, in particular, to distinguish between project posts and project-support posts. That would enable expenditures on administrative costs to be accurately assessed. It supported the streamlining of the New York office and the consolidation of operations at Copenhagen, but believed that more needed to be done to restructure UNICEF to avoid overlapping responsibilities and to secure a better utilization of limited resources.

77. In conclusion, he wished to remind the Board of the need for UNICEF to contribute to the preparatory process for the World Summit for Social Development by sharing the valuable experience it had gained in preparing for the World Summit for Children.

78. Mr. HUSSEIN (Ethiopia) said that his country was currently recovering from 30 years of civil war, in which the hardest hit victims of war, drought and underdevelopment had been children and mothers. Commending UNICEF on its operations in Ethiopia, he looked forward to continued support from the Fund in confronting malnutrition, poor sanitation, environmental degradation, illness, and infant and maternal morbidity and mortality.

79. Children and women constituted some three quarters of Ethiopia's population of 55 million and their situation under most indicators was extremely grim, showing severe malnutrition and high rates of morbidity and mortality, aggravated by the evils of war and displacement. Cognizant of those problems,

(Mr. Hussein, Ethiopia)

the Ethiopian Government had accorded special priority to children in its social welfare work and had adopted a national programme of action, aimed at combating the spread of AIDS, launching the Bamako Initiative and vigorously implementing the consensus reached at the International Conference on Assistance to African Children, held at Dakar in 1992. In the light of the Executive Director's recommendation that countries should devote at least 20 per cent of their budget to the social sector, he was pleased to report that the Ethiopian budget allocation to social sector needs, including education, was already 30 per cent and should increase in future years, particularly in view of the peace dividend. The national programme of action, geared to the specific conditions of Ethiopia and to the country's need for rehabilitation and reconstruction, had been designed to implement the commitments of the World Summit for Children. As the programme was linked to specific national priorities, which had been formulated to remedy years of misgovernment, long-term strategies were unrealistic.

80. The Ethiopian transitional Government had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and opportunities to protect the rights of children and to reach needy children in remote areas had been considerably enhanced by the end of the war and progress towards democracy. In addition, increased attention was being given to the problems of mothers, through the establishment of women's democratic institutions, such as the new Women's Affairs Office. High priority was also accorded to combating AIDS, through the establishment of a national AIDS control programme, which had received multilateral funding of $7 million for 1993, with pledges of continuing support.

81. Such endeavours notwithstanding, a great deal remained to be done in Ethiopia and the democratic processes under way in the country would provide a solid foundation for future efforts. While Ethiopia recognized the need to support the children of Eastern and Central Europe and the newly independent States, it believed that such assistance should not be given at the expense of the children of Africa and urged donors to increase their general level of support.

82. In particular, UNICEF had made commendable efforts to protect mothers and children in conflict situations in the Horn of Africa and to establish areas of tranquillity in conflict situations to allow relief programmes to function. The efforts of UNICEF had already secured a vast improvement in the situation of children world wide, but it required constant and increased support for its work. Ethiopia therefore set great store by the issues of accountability, transparency and governance in UNICEF itself, highlighted in the multi-donor evaluation. Ethiopia welcomed the initiative represented by that report, but felt that its value would have been enhanced if recipient countries had been involved in its preparation.

83. With regard to the headquarters issue, Ethiopia believed that all three options deserved serious consideration and that the issue should be settled at the current session, since all the necessary information was already on hand.

84. While the current reform process in the United Nations was timely, Ethiopia shared the view of other delegations that the restructuring should not diminish the ability of UNICEF to respond to the needs of mothers and children. In conclusion, he paid a tribute to the staff of UNICEF and the non-governmental

(Mr. Hussein, Ethiopia)

organization community for bravely continuing to serve the cause of children and women throughout the world.

85. Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil) drew attention, among a number of important initiatives to enhance the system's ability to respond to the needs of developing countries, to the comprehensive triennial policy review of operational activities, the process of the restructuring and revitalization of the economic, social and related fields of the United Nations and the restructuring of the United Nations Secretariat. It was vital, however, to ensure proper field-level coordination on those initiatives, so that they would be mutually reinforcing.

86. With regard to the triennial policy review, Brazil fully concurred with the Executive Director that General Assembly resolution 47/199 would be a landmark in promoting inter-agency cooperation, but stressed the need to bear in mind the basic principles underlying the consensus achieved in that and other resolutions adopted at the forty-seventh session. Among those principles, he drew attention to the primary coordinating role of the recipient Government, reaffirmed in paragraph 7 of the resolution 47/199, in accordance with which the resident coordinator and the field level committee must be viewed as mechanisms to assist Governments in the exercise of their responsibility.

87. In that connection, he stressed that the country strategy note should not be thrust upon Governments but should be viewed as a mechanism to be made available to them. Similarly, the field level committees were to be established in consultation with host Governments only in countries where the conditions so justified. While Brazil favoured closer cooperation and coordination among field agencies, it stressed the primary coordinating role of the recipient Government in that area. The resident coordinator, with an overview of the recipient country's needs and priorities, should act as a team leader and not become an additional bureaucratic layer, either between the field representatives and the Government or between those representatives and their respective headquarters.

88. As it had stated during the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, his delegation believed that the reform proposals under consideration were contrary to current trends towards decentralization and democratization. The conclusions reached by the ad hoc working group on the issue appeared to represent the best possible balance between the need for greater versatility by the governing bodies and the need for broad and democratic participation in their work, as well as between the advantages of coordinated guidance of the system by the Economic and Social Council and the risks of excessive centralization. The real test of the reforms, however, would be their ability to attract greater resources to the system and, while the current outlook was bleak, he urged Member States to match their efforts to reform the system with a corresponding increase in funds for development assistance.

89. In conclusion, he reiterated his Government's gratitude for the recognition which the Executive Board had accorded to the people and the State of Ceará for their work in the area of child survival and development by conferring upon them the Maurice Pate Award for 1993. The award demonstrated that Brazil had set itself very clear goals within the context of the World Summit for Children, but

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

the attainment of those goals depended on a continuing commitment to the cause of children, through both national efforts and enhanced international cooperation.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.